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## Editorial Human Remains and Violence

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*Human Remains and Violence* is a biannual, peer-reviewed publication which draws together the different strands of academic research on the dead body and the phenomena of human remains *en masse*. The creation of this journal is simultaneously an achievement and a point of departure: an achievement because it is the result of research undertaken since 2012 as part of the 'Corpses of mass violence and genocide' programme financed by the European Research Council, and a point of departure in that it hopes to extend and provide further new perspectives for that research.

With the publication of three volumes in English by Manchester University Press, two volumes in French published by Editions Petra in Paris, and two volumes in Spanish from Miño y Dávila Editores in Buenos Aires, the 'Corpses of mass violence and genocide' programme has enabled the identification of fundamental questions and the development of an informal network of researchers. This has provided an unprecedented opportunity to contribute to the emergence of an area of research that addresses new issues, including the social responses to cadavers and human remains in the context of violent events, whether mass crimes or genocides.

But the list of these issues is far from closed, and this is where the creation of our journal becomes a point of departure. *Human Remains and Violence* will publish studies that primarily address human bodies and remains that result from mass atrocities perpetrated against civilians, while also seeking to advance consideration of the way bodies are dealt with in situations of war, as well as the work of humanitarian agencies faced with human remains resulting from other kinds of disaster, such as natural catastrophes and epidemics. We thus intend to publish new and innovative research that genuinely takes into account the physicality of disaster and death by asking questions about how societies treat cadavers when they suddenly appear in large numbers and how these same societies are challenged by them. *Human Remains and Violence* does not consequently fall solely within genocide or disaster studies. Rather, its originality lies precisely in crossing and transcending the framework used in existing scholarly journals, which focus on either the body, death or mass violence.

Dead bodies and human remains, notably present *en masse* over the course of the twentieth century, raise unprecedented and specific questions for a great number of disciplines related to medico-legal sciences, human sciences and law. They even prompt the question of a 'forensic turn', understood as the historic mass engagement of contemporary societies in the practice of exhumation and the identification of human remains through these scientific means.

While the approaches that might bring insights into the questions we ask are potentially very diverse, the *Human Remains and Violence* journal initially arose out of a confrontation between anthropology, history, law and medico-legal studies. Each of these disciplines now finds itself addressing specific, emergent issues. In law, the first concern is to clarify the legal status accorded to cadavers and human remains, but also to examine the role assigned to them in judicial proceedings. History can now focus attention on the genealogy of mass exhumations by using the osteological collections of the nineteenth century, evidence from research conducted as part of efforts to find soldiers lost during global conflicts and potential transfers of knowledge between agents involved in these practices, particularly bearing in mind the systemic changes caused by the First World War. The role of anthropology is to evaluate the transformations that have occurred in the field of funerary practices, and to emphasise the emerging politics (necropolitics) and economics (necroeconomics) of the cadaver, enabling a clear view of what large-scale acts of exhumation really mean. Further, forensic sciences are the only way to piece together the developments in knowledge and medical techniques generated by the need to deal with very large quantities of cadavers and human remains.

*Human Remains and Violence* therefore aims to be resolutely multi-disciplinary, and to maintain this quality as one of the journal's defining features and fundamental objectives. It is our view that, in and through the study of dealing with cadavers *en masse*, a space for intellectual exchange will necessarily be created in which researchers of all professional specialisms and nationalities will be able to enter into a shared dialogue. The journal hopes to extend this space beyond European universities, to include contributions from researchers working on the same issues in Asia, Africa, the Americas and Oceania. We hope, by the same token, that the journal will also be able to stimulate the interest of young researchers around the world.

Finally, the *Human Remains and Violence* journal has chosen not to step out in a thematic format, but to prioritise dialogue in time and space between different disciplinary points of view on the absence, presence, search for, or return of cadavers and human remains on a large scale. However, the journal does not preclude the option of producing occasional thematic editions, as is the case, for example, in the second issue, which will deal with the place given to human remains in commemorative practices; such approaches can shed light on a field of research where we are only beginning to measure the wealth and abundance of work to be done, and which we are convinced will continue to grow rapidly.

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Editors